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THE ANCIENT JEWISH ALLEGORISTS IN TALMUD AND MIDRASH

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IN the Talmud and in the Midrashim interpretations of scriptural passages are occasionally quoted in the name of two classes of unknown ancient teachers, called דורשי רשומות, "*Dorshe Reshumot*," and דורשי חמורות, "*Dorshe Hamurot*," respectively. We never hear anything else about them. But they must have been among the very earliest Jewish interpreters of the Scriptures, for their interpretations and sayings are mentioned in sources so remote as the older halakic Midrashim, such as Sifre and Mekilta, and Tannaites of the first and the second generations are said to have explained some scriptural passages in their style and according to their exegetical method.¹ But who the old exegetes were, to what school or schools they belonged, what their tendency was, what method they applied in interpreting the Scripture, and why they were

¹ Many sayings of R. Johanan b. Zakkai are described as being בְּמִין חֲמֹר, which, as we shall see, means, in the style and the method of the *Dorshe Hamurot*. Similarly, Joshua b. Hananiah and Eleazar Hisma declare a scriptural passage to be רְשֻׁמוֹת, which, as we shall see, means that it is to be interpreted in the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*. According to Lekah Tob on Deut. 18, 3, it is Joshua b. Hananiah who quotes the saying of the *Dorshe Hamurot*, which, in Sifre Deut. 165, is quoted by Judah b. Ilai, and R. Akiba quotes the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* in Kohelet r. x. 1, see also below, p. 321.

designated as "*Dorshe Reshumot*" and "*Dorshe Hamurot*"—of all this nothing is said in the talmudic-midrashic literature.

The old commentators of the Talmud, like Rashi, the Aruk, and the Tosafot, tried to explain the meaning of the appellatives "*Reshumot*" and "*Hamurot*"; following their lead, some modern Jewish scholars have advanced various theories about these ancient exegetes. But all the explanations hitherto given of the words "*Reshumot*" and "*Hamurot*," and the theories based upon them by modern Jewish scholars are far from satisfactory. A correct and true opinion about them, their method, and their tendency, can be obtained only by means of careful and critical study, which should examine thoroughly the following three possible sources of information: (1) The historic data, the reports about these ancient teachers, provided such are to be found in ancient Jewish literature. (2) The meaning of the names applied to them, especially of the words רשומות and המורות forming part of these names, for it may be safely assumed that the names *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot* were chosen to designate definitely and accurately the tendency or the method of each of the two classes of exegetes respectively. (3) The sayings and interpretations of these teachers that have been preserved, for from these sayings taken in the aggregate we should be able to abstract the method they applied in interpreting the Scriptures, the purpose they aimed at through their interpretations, and their peculiar views about the scriptural word and its meaning. Regarding the first of these three sources, namely, historical reports, none is to be found in the Talmud or in any of the Midrashim. As stated above, nothing is said about the two classes of exegetes in the talmudic-midrashic

literature. They seem to be ignored persistently by the teachers of the traditional law, except inasmuch as some of their sayings are mentioned. Mishnah Soṭah ix. 9-15 mentions many classes of prominent men in ancient Jewry as pious men, men of faith, men of good, practical, social work; also schools of diligent students, interpreters, poets, scholars, and the time is given till when each school or group of men lived and worked, together with the name of the last of each school or class.² We might fitly expect to find among them our two classes of interpreters of the Scriptures, with the data that are reported about the others. But they are ignored here as elsewhere. We find often that when the Rabbis of the Talmud mention an ancient name they couple with it a question about its meaning, and then proceed to explain it with more or less correctness. Or they ask why this man or that group of men was called by such and such a name, and they try to give a reason for it.³ But in the case of the *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Ḥamurot*, they merely mention one or the other of these categories in quoting a saying of theirs, but they never ask:

² The passage in the Mishnah reads thus: משמת יוסי בן יועזר איש צרידה: ויוסי בן יוחנן איש ירושלים בטלו האשכולות... משחרב ביה"מ.... ופסקו אנשי אמנה... משמת ר' מאיר בטלו מושלי משלים משמת בן עזאי בטלו השקרנים. משמת בן זומא בטלו הדרשנים משמת ר"ח ב"ר בטלו אנשי מעשה משמת ר' יוסי קטנותא פסקו חסידים.

³ Thus, for instance, in Soṭah 47b, the question is asked מאי אשכולות "what is the meaning of the name אשכולות," and an explanation is given; *ibid.*, 48b, the name אנשי אמנה is explained to mean "true believers in God," and in p. Soṭah ix. 13 (24b) it is explained to mean "faithful and devoted students of the law." Mishnah Soṭah ix. 15 asks why the name "Kaṭanta" was given to the last of the Ḥasidim, Jose, and a reason is given for it. In Kiddushin 30a a reason is given why the ancient teachers were called "Soferim." In Shabbat 33b a reason is given why Judah b. Ilai was designated as "the chief speaker," ראש המדברים; and many other similar explanations of names are found in the Talmud.

מאי דורשי רשומות or מאי דורשי חמורות, "What or who were the *Dorshe Reshumot* or the *Dorshe Hamurot*?" ; nor do they attempt to explain the meaning of the names, and why certain teachers were called by them, נקרא שמם, ולמה חמורות, ד' רשומות, ד' חמורות, as they do in connection with other names.

It would seem that by the end of the second century or thereabouts the rabbis felt a certain resentment towards these ancient exegetes, their method, and their tendency, and they quoted their sayings only reluctantly. Although their utterances were preserved, and their method was well known, and occasionally even followed by the rabbis of the first half of the third century,⁴ they purposely avoided giving any account of them, and sought rather to let them fall into oblivion.

But if the first source of information, direct historical reports, fails us, the other two means of ascertaining the character of these ancient exegetes and who they were are still available. We know at least the names by which they were called, and happily sayings of theirs have been preserved to us. These two sources of information are so intimately connected with each other that they are practically one and the same. For, as was said above, their names must have been applied to these teachers, because they were characteristic of their peculiar method and their tendency, both of which should be deducible by an examination of the sayings preserved to us. Obviously, any theory con-

⁴ Simon the son of R. Judah I gives an interpretation to Exod. 21, 6 which is characterized as כמין חמר, that is, in the method of the *Dorshe Hamurot* (*Ḳiddushin* 22b). Perhaps it was his brother Gamaliel III, who, in *Soṭah* 15a, gives an interpretation to a scriptural passage which he describes as being according to the method of the *Dorshe Hamurot*, כמין חמר

ceived about the “*Dorshe Reshumot*” and “*Dorshe Hamurot*” must have the support of the testimony derived from their names and that derived from their sayings. In other words, a theory to be helpful, must explain satisfactorily the etymological meaning of the names, and show that they express a special tendency or a special method, and it must furthermore prove that every single interpretation handed down to us in the name of the *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot* actually shows the tendency or the method supposed from the evidence given by the names themselves to have been characteristic of them.

No such theory has been offered by any one of the scholars⁵ who have written about our ancient exegetes. None advanced by the mediæval and the modern Jewish writers offers a correct etymological definition of the words רשומות and חמורות. And again, the method which, according to one or other of these various theories, is supposed to have been characteristic of these ancient exegetes, can be shown at most only in a few of their sayings, and in none with convincing clearness.

The theory advanced in the present article seems to satisfy all the demands enumerated above. In any event, it is supported by all the evidence that can be derived from

⁵ Observations about the *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot* have been made by Rashi, the Aruk, and the Tosafot; by Hamburger, *Real-Encyclopädie*, II, 52, s. v. “Allegorie,” Weiss in his *Dor Dor we-Dorsho*, I, 202, and *Middot Soferim* on Mekilta, 83b, 53a, and 61a; Kohut in *Aruch Completum*, s. v. חמר; Brüll, *Jahrbuch*, I, 181 ff; Joseph Perles, *REJ.*, 109 ff; Isidore Weil, *ibid.*, III, 276 ff; Bacher, *Die exegetische Terminologie der Jüdischen Traditionsliteratur*, I, 62, s. v. חמר, and 183 ff., s. v. רשום; Zunz, *GV.*, 336; Eisenstein, *Ozar Israel*, s. v. דורשי רשומות. But none of these scholars considered and examined all the sayings of the *Dorshe Reshumot* that have been preserved. All those found in Mekilta d. R. Simeon and in Midrash Hagadol were altogether unknown to them.

the three available sources of information. It offers a characteristic mark of the method peculiar to our anonymous interpreters of the Scriptures, and shows clearly that this method has been used in each and every one of their sayings. It gives a satisfactory explanation of the etymological meaning of the words *Reshumot* and *Hamurot*, which form their names, and shows that these names were chosen aptly to characterize the peculiarity of these exegetes, since they convey adequately the method applied by them in interpreting the Scripture. The present theory is, besides, confirmed by what is known about these ancient Jewish interpreters of the Scripture from reliable sources outside of the Talmud and the Midrashim. Furthermore, it demonstrates that the teachers of the traditional law had sufficient cause for the resentment they felt towards these exegetes and for objecting to their tendency. Thus, finally, will be explained the persistent silence observed by the rabbis of the Talmud about these ancient interpreters of the Scripture, and why only a few⁶ of their interpretations have been preserved in the talmudic-midrashic literature.

The hypothesis advanced by Rashi⁷ and accepted by the majority of modern scholars, that the *Dorshe Reshumot*

⁶ Altogether we have fourteen interpretations of scriptural passages, in the name of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, and four sayings of the *Dorshe Hamurot*; to the latter must be added seven interpretations designated as being in the method of the *Dorshe Hamurot* כמין חמר. See the complete list of these sayings quoted below. It is certain, however, that there must have been many more of their interpretations and sayings. For certain reasons the rabbis of the Talmud did not care to preserve them or mention them in the name of their originators.

⁷ Rashi, Berakot 24a, s. v. דורשי רשומות, remarks ד'חמורות גרסינן והיא היא, "We read *Dorshe Hamurot* instead of *Dorshe Reshumot*, but both are the same." Bacher, *Terminologie*, follows Rashi, and remarks, on p. 62: "Jedenfalls bezeichnen beide Ausdrücke [*Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot*] dieselben alten Schriftausleger," and, on page 183, he mentions

and *Dorshe Hamurot* were two names given to one and the same class of teachers or exegetes, must be rejected as absolutely false. There is no valid reason for calling one class of teachers by two different names. If the two were one, how came they to be designated by two different names, seeing that these names were to characterize peculiar methods or special tendencies? It is evident that each of the two names must designate a special class⁸ of exegetes whose peculiar method or tendency it characterizes. It was merely the ignorance of the character and the tendency of the two classes of interpreters of the Scripture that made it possible to identify them with each other. The old commentators of the Talmud, unable to distinguish between the peculiarities of the two classes, believed them

the דורשי רשומות, "*die auch חמורות genannt werden.*". Zunz, *GV.*, 336, and Kohut, *Aruch*, s. v., also identify the *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot* with each other, and neither Perles nor Weil, in their articles, *l. c.*, distinguish between the two classes.

⁸ The first, so far as I am aware, to distinguish between the *Dorshe Reshumot* and *Dorshe Hamurot* and to recognize them as two distinct classes of exegetes was Hamburger. He remarks in his *Real-Encyclopädie*, II, 52; "*Es werden zwei Klassen von Schriftforschern genannt: die Forscher der Andeutungen, דורשי רשומות, und die Forscher des buchstäblichen Textes, דורשי חמורות, von denen Erstere sicherlich Allegoristen waren.*" Weiss also distinguished between the two; he gives of each one of them a different definition. The *Dorshe Reshumot* he describes as allegorists, דורשי רשומות, וציור נקראו דורשי רשומות, *Dor*, I, 202; and דורשי רשומות הם היו התכמים שדרשו הפסוקים בדרך משל ומליצה ורמוז ויצאים מוגדר הפשט שכן ענין מלת רשום, *Middot Soferim* on Mekilta, 53. The *Dorshe Hamurot*, on the other hand, he describes as those who seek to give a reason for the law, דורשי חמורות, ונקראו דורשי חמורות, *Dor*, I, 202; or those interpreters whose method was the "measure for measure" rule, מורש דורשי חמורות הוא על דרך מדה כנגד מדה, *Middot Soferim*, 83). We shall discuss these definitions of Hamburger and Weiss later on. Both of them consider only the דורשי רשומות as allegorists, but we shall see that the דורשי חמורות were also allegorists, though of another kind and of a different school.

to be but one. This mistaken identification of two distinct classes of exegetes had the fatal consequence that the later teachers and copyists of the Talmud would often substitute one name for the other, and the result of interchanging the two names is confusion and lack of uniformity in the readings in the various editions and manuscripts of the works with which we are concerned. A saying ascribed to the *Dorshe Reshumot* in a given work is sure to be quoted in another edition, or in a manuscript of the same work, in the name of the *Dorshe Hamurot*; or *vice versa*.

It must be admitted that the two classes of exegetes were in one respect like each other. Their common characteristic was that they both interpreted the Scriptures in an allegorical sense, not according to the plain and literal meaning of the words. Nevertheless, though both were allegorists, they were absolutely distinct from each other—in origin, motive, and tendency, as well as in the method each applied in the interpretation of scriptural passages. Thus it was just that each class should be called by a special name, to distinguish it from the other.

We shall now proceed to show the different methods, tendencies, and origins of the two classes of allegoristic interpreters of the Scripture. We shall treat them separately, and we begin with the *Dorshe Reshumot*.

The definition of *Dorshe Reshumot*, given by Rashi^{*} and accepted by Bacher, *l. c.*, 184, as "interpreters of those difficult passages in the Scriptures which are unclear in the

* Berakot 24a, דורשי רשומות, קשרים ופתומים הכלולים בתורה, "the *Dorshe Reshumot* are the interpreters of the knots and abstruse passages contained in the Law." It is noteworthy that in Sanhedrin 104b, Rashi describes the דורשי רשומות merely as דורשי פסוקים, "interpreters of verses or passages." Bacher characterizes the דורשי רשומות as "die Ausleger der undeutlichen, den Gedanken nur in Andeutungen enthaltenden Bibelworte."

meaning, and fail to express a thought explicitly," is absolutely wrong. All the scriptural passages on which interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot* have been preserved are very clear and distinct in the meaning of their words, and the thought, expressed by the literal meaning of their words, is far more clear and explicit than the one ascribed to them by the interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot*.¹⁹

Besides, the word רשומות cannot mean "obscure" or "difficult" passages. The singular term רשום, occurring in Mekilta, Amalek 1, ed. Weiss, 61a, with which Bacher seeks to support this definition of רשומות, has not, as he assumes, the same meaning as סתום, "abstruse" or "unintelligible." Although Yalkut, in quoting this passage of the Mekilta, offers the reading סתום instead of רשום, this does not prove that סתום and רשום are identical in their meanings. By substituting the word סתום for רשום, the Yalkut, or some copyist of it, attempted to explain the word רשום, the exact meaning of which he did not know. This substitute, סתום, was suggested to him by the following word ומפורש, which is often used as a contrast to סתום (comp. Bacher, *l. c.*, 137). He took רשום ומפורש to be like סתום ומפורש. But this was a misunderstanding of the meaning of the word רשום. The word רשום in the Mekilta passage is merely the singular form of the term רשומות used in the name דורשי רשומות. But the phrase: המקרא הזה רשום does not mean, as Bacher takes it, "this scriptural

¹⁹ Bacher himself felt that this definition of *Dorshe Reshumot* is not borne out by all their interpretations, but he thinks that at least some of their interpretations are of such a nature as to justify Rashi's and his own theory. After giving his characterization of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, he adds: "*Wozu wenigstens ein Teil der unter ihrem Namen erhaltenen Aussprüche stimmt*" (*l. c.*, 184). But we shall see that not even one of their sayings justifies his definition, for all the passages interpreted by them are, without exception, very explicit in their meaning.

passage is obscure, and not distinct." It will be proved further on, where this passage of the Mekilta will be cited together with its parallel, that the phrase **המקרא הזה רשום** merely means: This verse of the Bible can, or is to, be considered as a **רשום**, that is, it can, or is to, be interpreted in the manner or according to the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*. The singular form **רשום** therefore in no way helps us to define the meaning of the plural form **רשומות**. We have to go back to the etymological meaning of the verb **רשם** in order to get the correct meaning of both nouns **רשום** and **רשומות**.

The verb **רשם** in Hebrew and Aramaic means "to mark," "to make a sign," "to signify," or "to designate," and hence also to represent symbolically,¹¹ and the noun **רשום** means, therefore, a visible "mark," "sign," or "symbol," which serves to indicate something or represents an idea or communicates some information. Such a sign or symbol does not completely describe the subject of which it is a sign, or which it is to symbolize, it merely reminds one of it or suggests it. Any word used in a figurative sense, to convey some idea or express some thought, is such a sign or symbol. The word in itself has its simple and literal meaning, yet if there is some resemblance between it and that which it is to symbolize, it can be used as a sign or a symbol for the latter. A word can be used as a sign for a certain idea, quality, or action, or state, if only one feature or one aspect of the idea, quality, action,

¹¹ This development of the meaning of the verb **רשם** can be traced also in Syriac, where the verb **רשם** means *delineate, designate* and then also *signify, represent symbolically*, as in the phrase, **לאתא דשינא תרשום**, said of the olive branch "it should represent to us the sign of peace," and **בלחמא פטירא**, said of a guiltless life, "it is indicated by unleavened bread" (see J. Payne Smith, *A Compendious Syriac Dictionary*, s. v.).

or state, can be compared with, or represented by, it, for this one feature or this one aspect, suggested by the word, will bring to mind the whole idea, etc. For this reason, also, the first word of a sentence can be used as a sign to represent the entire sentence, as one letter of a word may be used as a sign for the whole word, since the first letter or the first word will bring to mind what followed, the whole word or the whole sentence.

The name *Dorshe Reshumot*, accordingly, designates a certain class of exegetes, whose peculiar method was to see in the words of the Scripture signs or symbols and parabolical expressions, which should be taken in a figurative sense, not in their plain and literal meaning. This method was also termed מִשָּׁל, "allegoristic interpretation," to interpret the words in a metaphorical sense.¹² They did not deny that the words have a literal meaning as well, and that this literal meaning is very simple, clear, and distinct. But they thought that a merely literal interpretation of the Scripture does not do full justice to the scriptural word, does not exhaust its meaning. For some passages of the Scripture absolutely demand, and others justify, or, at least, allow an allegorical interpretation, according to which they have a metaphorical sense, and express higher ideas than those conveyed by their simple meaning. Briefly, they were allegoristic interpreters of the Scripture, and the name דֹּרְשֵׁי רִשְׁמוֹת is a true characterization of them. It expresses adequately the method

¹² See Rule 26 of the Thirty-two Rules of R. Eliezer b. R. Jose Hagelili. The three interpretations given by R. Ishmael, and characterized as being according to the method of Masha! כְּמִין מִשָּׁל (Mekilta, ed. Weiss, 88b, and Sifre Deut., ed. Friedmann, 117b) are according to the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*. They take the words not in their literal meaning, but in a figurative sense (see below pp. 328-29).

applied by them, namely, to interpret, דרש, the words as רשומות,¹³ as signs, figures, and symbols to remind us of something else than what is expressed by their literal meaning. The literal sense of a word or a passage is designated as כשמועו or כמשמעו, "according to its literal meaning." We find, accordingly, that in most places where the interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot* are mentioned, there are also mentioned other explanations, "according to the plain, literal sense", כשמועו, in contrast with their allegorical interpretations. As the literal meaning of the words was considered their true sense אמת, the contrast between the literal sense, characterized as אמת, and the allegoristic or figurative sense, characterized as משל, or רשום, is expressed in a more drastic form in the phrases אם אמת אם אמת למה (Sanhedrin 92), or¹⁴ אם אמת למה אם אמת למה (p. Yebamot 13a and Genes. r. 81, 2),

¹³ The word רשומות in the name דורשי רשומות is not the object of דרש and does not designate a peculiar class of passages or particular words of the Scriptures interpreted by these exegetes. It designates the peculiar method of taking the words as symbols, by which they interpreted the Scriptures. Similarly in the phrases: ריש ריבוי ומיעוטי דרשי כללי ופרטי (Shebuot 37b), and דריש סמוכים (Yebamot 4a and Berakot 10a), the words ריבוי ומיעוטי, כללי ופרטי, סמוכים are not the object of דרש, but characterize the method; they do not designate the passages that are interpreted, but how, in what way, they are interpreted.

¹⁴ It was this contrast between the term רשום, meaning, "figurative" or "allegorical sense," and the term אמת, meaning "literally true," that the people of Simonia had in their mind when they asked Levi to explain to them the passage in Daniel 10, 21, הרשום בכתב אמת, which seemed to them to be a contradiction in terms (p. l. c.). The explanation of this passage, which Levi afterwards gave to Judah I, רשום קודם גז"ר אמת לאחר גז"ר, corrects the opinion of the questioners, and assumes that the term רשום in Daniel 10, 21 has not the same meaning which it has in the technical term רשום, "allegorical sense." For it is characteristic of a sign or mark, רשום, that it is often made for temporary use only, liable to be changed, corrected, or rubbed off altogether. In this sense it is used in the passage in Daniel, to designate something marked or written down, which is yet doubtful and not meant to be final and permanent. And although even

both of which phrases mean: "If you take the scriptural passage in a true, literal sense, how can you say it is its allegorical sense? And if you take it in its allegorical sense, how can you at the same time describe it as its true, literal meaning?" (see below, pp. 328-29).

This theory about the *Dorshe Reshumot* is thus supported by the information we can derive from one source, from the etymological meaning of the words composing the name given to them. We have now to test the validity of this theory by consulting the other source of information, their sayings and interpretations. We shall quote, in the following, a complete list of all the sayings and interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, and in examining them we shall find that in all the method applied is the one mentioned above, and designated by the word *Reshumot*, namely, the method of explaining the words in a metaphorical sense, treating them as signs and symbols for certain ideas. We shall find that some of the interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot* are also found in the writings of Philo, which only confirms the theory that, like the latter, the *Dorshe Reshumot* were allegoristic interpreters of the Scriptures. The parallels in the writings of Philo will help us sometimes to a better understanding of the sayings of the *Dorshe Reshumot*. For these sayings and

in this sense **רשום** forms a contrast to the term **אמת**, which means something "true and lasting," yet the difficulty can be explained away by referring each term to different conditions, namely, **רשום קודם גזר דין**, "Before the sentence has been finally given and approved," the punishment it recommends is only **רשום**, "marked down," with the possibility of being changed or blotted out, in case the sentence is not approved; **אמת לאחר גזר דין**, but "after the sentence has been approved and confirmed," it is **אמת**, written down as a positive, permanent, and lasting document, not subject to change or correction. Of course, in the sense which the word **רשום** has in the phrase **רשום קודם גזר דין אמת לאחר גזר דין**, it has nothing to do with **רשום**, **רשומות**, used in the name **דורשי רשומות**.

interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot* have not always been preserved in their original and complete form. Some of them were condensed or shortened, and of some of them only one part has been preserved in the talmudic-midrashic literature, while the other part, left out or purposely ignored by the talmudic teachers, is to be found in Philo's works.

As their method was developed gradually by the allegoristic interpreters, I shall quote their sayings in an order that will indicate its origin and its successive stages, how it was originally applied only to special class of scriptural passages, absolutely demanding an allegorical interpretation, how it was later on extended more and more beyond its original limits, till it came to be applied, rather excessively, to passages that could hardly bear an allegorical interpretation.

The oldest and most original saying preserved of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is probably the following one in Sifre, Deut., 49, ed. Friedmann, 85*a*, referring to the passage in Deut. 11, 22:

"To walk in all His ways and to cleave unto Him." דורשי רשומות אומרים רצונך שתכיר מי שאמר והיה העולם למור הנדה שמתוך כך אתה מכיר את הקב"ה ומדבק בדרכיו. The *Dorshe Reshumot* say, "If thou desirest to recognize Him who by His word created the world, learn to understand and interpret correctly what the Scripture says about Him, for in this way thou canst recognize the Holy One, blessed be He, and cleave unto, and follow, His ways."

From this saying we can learn the origin of the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, and what it was that caused them to interpret words as symbols. The passage in Deut. 11, 22 was difficult to understand, as the phrase "to cleave unto Him" could not be taken literally, for, as Sifre expresses it:

וְכִי הֵי אֵךְ אִפְשֵׁר לוֹ לְאָדָם לַעֲלוֹת בְּמָרוֹם וּלְהִרְבֵּק בּוֹ “How is it possible for a human being to go up to God and cleave unto Him?”. As an answer to this question, the saying of the allegoristic interpreters is quoted: In order to recognize God one must learn to interpret the scriptural expressions about Him correctly,¹⁵ that is, take them as רִשּׁוּמוֹת as figurative and allegorical expressions. In doing so, he learns to know God and realizes that the expression “to cleave unto Him” has but the meaning “to imitate Him” and “follow His ways.” The original motive of the *Dorshe Reshumot* was to explain away all attributes inconsistent with their idea of a spiritual God. They, therefore, interpreted all anthropomorphic expressions in the Scriptures not according to their literal meaning, but in a metaphorical sense. One of Philo’s rules of allegorical interpretation is “to give up the literal meaning of a scriptural passage, if it says or implies something about God which, according to our pure conception of Him, is not becoming.”¹⁶

We should not think, however, that the *Dorshe Reshumot* were influenced by Philo or other Alexandrian allegorists. They were Palestinian teachers, and they developed their method of allegorical interpretation independent of external influences. Their allegorical interpretation of anthropomorphic expressions about God was the

¹⁵ The term הִגְרָה is used here in its original meaning, in the sense of הִגְרָת הַכְּתוּב, what the Scripture really means to say, what it wants to indicate and teach, comp. Bacher, *l. c.*, 30 and 33. “To learn” הִגְרָה means, therefore, to learn the right method of interpreting the Scripture, so as to be able to get the full meaning of the scriptural word, and what it wants to tell us.

¹⁶ Comp. Carl Siegfried, *Philo von Alexandrien als Ausleger des Alten Testaments*, Jena, 1875, 165-66, with many references to Philo’s writings where this rule is observed.

natural result of their strict and pure monotheism and of their conception of God as an incorporeal Being.”

Mekilta d. R. Simon b. Johai, ed. Hoffmann, 153a, 5: דורשי רשומות אומרים אלקים לא תקלל מלארך ודמער לא תאחר שאם קללת דיין תבוארך אתה מקלל. The *Dorshe Reshumot* say that the meaning of the two verses (Exod. 23, 27-28) is: If you curse [or despise] the judge, you will bring a curse upon your grain.

Preceding this saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, the Mekilta d. R. Simon (*ibid.*, 152) quotes one by R. Eliezer b. Jacob, which takes the word “Elohim” in its literal meaning, so that v. 27 forbids cursing or blaspheming God, ליתן אוהרה על ברכת השם. In the same way the verse is interpreted by R. Akiba, in Mekilta d. R. Ishmael (ed. Weiss, 102b). As a contrast to these literal interpretations of the verse, the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is quoted. They do not take the word “Elohim” in its literal meaning, to designate God, but they consider it as a רשום, a sign, designating the human judge who executes divine justice. The meaning of v. 27 is, accordingly, to forbid the cursing or reviling of a human judge. For it would be unbecoming in God to forbid man to curse or revile Him. It might imply that it could affect Him. They further saw in the proximity of the two verses, 27 and 28, an indication that there is a relation of cause and effect between the two actions forbidden by them. They mean: Do not curse the judge, that you may not bring curses upon your harvest.

That the allegoristic interpreters (*Dorshe Reshumot*) should apply this method of סמוכים, which derives special

²¹ Comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 19. We must bear this in mind, for it will help us to understand the development of the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot* and distinguish them from the *Dorshe Hamurot* (see below, p. 329).

meanings from the position of the verses near each other, is not at all strange. It is one of Philo's rules of allegorical interpretation, to consider the position of the verses and attach a special meaning to their juxtaposition (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 178-179).

The next step taken by the *Dorshe Reshumot* in developing their method was to extend its application to other passages the literal interpretation of which presented some difficulty¹⁸ and for this reason had to be abandoned, as the literal interpretation of the anthropomorphic expressions about God had to be abandoned because of the insurmountable difficulty they presented. This is shown in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* (b. Berakot 24a): דורשי רשומות אמרו והיו חייד תלואים לך מנגד : זה התולה תפיליו. The *Dorshe Reshumot*¹⁹ said that the verse in Deut. 28, 66, "And thy life shall hang (in doubt) before thee," applies to the man who lets his Tefillin hang; that is, who is suspended in doubt in regard to his beliefs and religious principles, symbolized by the Tefillin.

The literal meaning of this passage presents some difficulty, for how can life hang? "Thy life shall hang before thee" does not give good sense. The literal interpretation of this passage had, therefore, to be abandoned, and the word חייד, "thy life", is taken by the *Dorshe Reshumot* in a figurative sense, as a רשום, a symbolic sign, for the religious

¹⁸ It was one of the rules of Philo, that whenever the passage presents some difficulty, or does not yield good sense, the literal meaning is to be abandoned, and the allegorical adopted. Comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 166-167.

¹⁹ Some editions have here *Dorshe Hamurot* instead of *Dorshe Reshumot*, also Rashi, *ad locum*. But as was stated on p. 298, these names are often interchanged. The correct reading here is *Dorshe Reshumot*, as found in many editions, and confirmed by Asheri, in Halakot Ketanot, Hilkot Tefillin, 28, and by Midrash Hagadol, MS. Schechter, on Deut. 28, 66. In the last place, however, some copyist wrote above the word רשומות, the word חמורות, which he deemed correct.

doctrines that are the sources of the true life. Tefillin, in the phrase התולה תפלו, does not mean the phylacteries themselves, but that for which they stand as symbols. This saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is correctly explained by Judah Leon de Modena, in his *Haboneh*: התפילין רמו על עיקרי האמונה שכתוב בהן מציאותו יתברך יחודו ויכלתו ובזה צריך שיהיה האדם נכון וקיים ישר ונאמן ולא מסופק ותלוי, "The Tefillin are symbols for the fundamental principles and dogmas of religion, for the written passages they contain deal with the belief in the existence of God, His unity, and His Omnipotence. In these beliefs a man must be firm and steadfast, upright and faithful, and not wavering and doubting."

The interpretation which the *Dorshe Reshumot* give to this passage in Deut. 28, 66, is the same as Philo's. In his treatise "On the Posterity of Cain," ch. viii, Philo says²⁰: "Thy life shall hang in doubt before thee,' for it is the nature of the foolish man who is always being tossed about in a manner contrary to right reason to be hostile to tranquillity and rest, and not stand firmly or with a sure foundation on any doctrine whatever. Accordingly, he is full of different opinions at different times, and sometimes even in the same circumstances, without any new occurrence having arisen to affect them, he will be perfectly contrary to himself, now great, now little, now hostile, now friendly, and, in short, he will, so to say, be everything that is most inconsistent in a moment of time, and as the Lawgiver says: 'All his life shall hang in doubt before him,' having no firm footing, but being constantly tossed about by opposing circumstances which drag it different ways."

²⁰ All quotations from Philo's works are given in this article according to Young's English translation.

Evidently Philo and the *Dorshe Reshumot* agree, only the interpretation of the latter has not been preserved in its original, but rather in a condensed and shortened form. Considering that this is true, that the sayings of the *Dorshe Reshumot* have not been transmitted to us in their original form, we may doubt whether the word Tefillin was used by them to designate the principles or doctrines of the religion. It is more probable that the *Dorshe Reshumot*, in their interpretation, used another, more explicit word, to designate religious doctrines or beliefs. The later rabbis, who often used their own terms in reproducing the interpretation or meaning given to certain passages by the *Dorshe Reshumot*, must have substituted here the term Tefillin, which to them symbolized the religious doctrines, for some other word used by the *Dorshe Reshumot* themselves.

In interpreting the word חַיִּיךָ, "thy life," to mean religion, which is the source of true life, the *Dorshe Reshumot* were supported by the fact that in many passages of the Scripture, as, for instance, Deut. 30, 15, 20, the word חַיִּים, "life," is obviously used as a figure of speech, to designate the law, or religion, as the source of life. It was one of the rules of allegorical interpretation given by Philo, that the literal interpretation of a word is to be abandoned when it becomes evident from the context that it is used merely in a figurative sense (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 168). The Palestinian allegorists, the *Dorshe Reshumot*, independently of Philo, followed the same rule, and they even made it the means of extending the application of their method. Thus, for instance, if in a given passage of the Scripture a word was obviously used, to judge from the context, in a figurative sense, to designate a thing not covered by its literal meaning, then the *Dorshe*

Reshumot would consider it an established fact that it can be used as a *רשום*, a figure, or sign, to designate the thing, and they would interpret it in the same figurative sense even in passages in which the context demanded or favored a literal interpretation.

Examples of such an extended application of their method are the following two sayings of the *Dorshe Reshumot*:

Mekilta d.-R. Ishmael, Way. 1, ed. Weiss, 52*b*, and Mekilta d.R. Simeon, ed. Hoffmann, 72, and b. Baba Ḳamma 82*a*, with slight variations: *וילכו שלשת ימים במדבר ולא מצאו מים דורשי רשומות אמרו לא מצאו דברי תורה שנמשלו למים שנאמר מים דורשי רשומות אמרו לא מצאו דברי תורה שנמשלו למים שנאמר מים דורשי רשומות אמרו לא מצאו דברי תורה שנמשלו למים שנאמר* “And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water” (Exod. 15, 22). The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, They did not find the words of the law, or religious instruction, which are called water metaphorically,²¹ for thus it is said (Isa. 55, 1): “Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the water.”

Because in this passage in Isaiah the word “water” is evidently used as a figure of speech to designate the Divine word, the *Dorshe Reshumot* interpreted it, in a figurative sense, to designate symbolically the Divine law, even in the passage in Exodus, where its simple and literal meaning is patent. Philo is also in the habit of interpreting the word “water” in a figurative sense, to mean the Divine word, or wisdom. Thus, in his treatise, “On the Allegories of the Sacred Laws,” II, ch. xxi, he interprets the passage in Deut. 8, 14, “Who brought thee forth water,” to mean the

²¹ The word *נמשל* here is derived from the term *משל* which means “allegorical interpretation” (see above p. 301 and comp. Bacher, 122); it means, therefore, “allegorically expressed,” or “symbolically represented.” By way of contrast to this allegorical interpretation is given the literal interpretation as *כשמועיו*, Mekilta, *ibid*.

Divine word. Also in his treatise, "On Dreams, That They Are Sent from God," II, ch. xxxi, and *ibid.*, ch. xxxviii, he interprets the words of Ps. 65, 10, "the river of God full of water," to mean the Divine word full of wisdom.

Mekilta, Way., ed. Weiss, 53a; also Mekilta D. R. S., ed. Hoffmann, 73, on Exod. 15, 25 :

ויוורו ד' עץ וישלך אל המים וימתקו המים דורשי רשומות אמרו הראהו דברי תורה שנמשלו לעץ שנאמר עץ חיים היא למחויקים בה: "And the Lord showed him a tree, and he cast it into the waters, and the waters were made sweet" (Exod. 15, 25). The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, He showed him the words of the Torah, which are designated as a tree in a figurative sense, as it is said (Prov. 3, 18) : "She [the Torah, or Wisdom] is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her."

The *Dorshe Reshumot* took the word עץ, "tree", as a symbol, or sign, representing figuratively the Torah, because, in one passage of the Scripture, this word is obviously used as a figurative expression, to designate the Torah. Philo, "On the Posterity of Cain", ch. xlv, also interprets the sweetening branch thrown into the water as meaning "a medicine upon our soul causing it to love labor". Accordingly, he interprets "Marah", not as a real place where the waters were bitter, but as a certain state of mind. Also in the treatise "On the Migration of Abraham", ch. viii, Philo explains "tree" as meaning "virtue", and the waters as meaning "mind." It is evident that the *Dorshe Reshumot*, interpreting "tree" to mean the Law, must also have interpreted "Marah" in an allegorical sense, and not literally as a place of bitter waters, for bitter waters cannot be made sweet by words of the law. But the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* has been preserved in an incomplete form; it is shortened; it mentions only that the tree was not a real tree, and omits that the bitter waters were not real bitter waters.

The following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* has also come down to us in a condensed form. Sifre Numb. 160, ed. Friedmann, 162a:

דורשי רשומות אמרו נ' עריות הכתובים בפרשה ושפטו העדה והצילו העדה והשיבו אותו העדה ללמדך שדיני נפשות בשלשים:

The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, The word עדה "congregation" mentioned three times in this passage (Num. 35, 24-25): "The congregation shall judge, and the congregation shall deliver, and the congregation shall restore", is to teach you that criminal cases, in which the life of the defendant is in jeopardy, must be brought before a tribunal consisting of thirty judges.

The premise on which this saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is based is omitted here. They took the word עדה, "congregation," not in its literal meaning, as the community or the entire congregation, but in accordance with their method, they interpreted it as a sign standing for a group of ten persons. They applied here the same principle as in interpreting עץ, "tree," to mean "words of the law." Because in one passage of the Scripture (Numb. 14, 27), the word עדה, "congregation", is used to designate a group of ten,²² the *Dorshe Reshumot* took the word as a sign for

²² The phrase in Num. 14, 27, "this evil congregation," has been understood as referring to the spies, Joshua and Caleb excluded, hence it came to be used as a designation for a group of ten, for besides Joshua and Caleb there were only ten spies. See Mishnah Sanhedrin i. 6, and also Mishnah Abot iii. 7. It is noteworthy that this interpretation of the *Dorshe Reshumot* effected a practical decision that cases in which the life of the defendant is in jeopardy can only be decided by a body of thirty judges. This is an exception to the rule given by Weiss (*Middot Soferim* on Mekilta 53a), that the interpretation of the *Dorshe Reshumot* were not considered to be of the kind by means of which halakic laws are derived from the written law: ענין שם דורשי רשומות מורה שלא העמידו: מין מדרשים אלה בגדר המדרשים אשר מהם הוציאו הלכות. See below p. 329, also note 32, the rule of R. Eliezer b. R. Jose Hagelili in regard to the method of מושל, or allegoristic interpretation.

a group of ten even in other passages. And as in the passage Num. 35, 24-25, the word occurs three times, they derived from it that three such groups of ten, or thirty persons, are required to judge and decide a case in which the life of the defendant is in jeopardy.

A further step, extending the application of their method, was made by the *Dorshe Reshumot*, when they brought it to bear on passages and words the literal meaning of which afford no difficulty whatever, and which are in the Scripture not used in an allegorical sense anywhere. Thus, for instance, they would interpret proper names, not as names, but as signs or symbols for certain states of mind that may be indicated by the proper name. Of this kind is the following saying in Mekilta d. R. Simon, ed. Hoffmann, 82:

דורשי רשומות אומרים אין רפידים אלא רפיון ידיים לפי שרופו ידיהם של ישראל מן התורה לפיכך בא עליהן שונא שאין השונא בא אלא על החטא ועל העבירה²³:

The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, Rephidim [mentioned in Exod. 17, 8 as the place where Amalek fought with Israel] means nothing else than "weakness of hands", because the Israelites relaxed in their keeping of the law, therefore came the enemy upon them, for the enemy comes only because of sin and transgression.

The passage does not mean, accordingly, "Amalek came and fought with Israel in Rephidim", but rather, "Amalek came and fought with Israel because of their neglect to keep the law." Preceding this saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* in the Mekilta, the interpretation given by R. Eliezer is mentioned. According to this רפידים is to be taken כמשמעו, literally, to designate a certain locality

²³ In Mekilta d. R. Ishmael, Amalek I, ed. Weiss, 61a, this saying is given in the name of *Aherim*, "Others"; see below note 31.

called Rephidim. In contrast to this literal interpretation follows the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, according to which Rephidim is a sign, or symbol, and signifies the Israelites' attitude toward the law.²⁴

This saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* throws light on the passage in the Mekilta d. R. Ishmael, from which Bacher sought to prove that רשום means, like סתום, "obscure," "indistinct." The passage is in Mekilta, Amalek I. It is quoted here according to Friedmann's edition:

ויבא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל ברפידים ר' יהושע ור' אלעזר בן חסמא אומר המקרא הזה רשום (ומפורש ע"י איוב שנאמר הינאה נומא בלא ביצה ישנא אחו בלי מים (איוב ח') וכי איפשר לגומא להתנדל בלא ביצה הישנא אחו בלי מים וכי איפשר לאחו בלי מים כך אי איפשר לישראל בלא תורה) ולפי שפירשו מדברי תורה לכן בא עליהם השונא שאין השונא בא אלא על החטא ועל העבירה:

The saying of R. Joshua refers to the word רפידים, as is seen in Friedmann's edition, where the full verse is quoted ויבא עמלק וילחם עם ישראל ברפידים. In Weiss' edition, 61a, the second half of the verse is omitted, and only the first half is quoted ויבא עמלק, as often happens in the Midrashim; the beginning of the verse is quoted, although the interpretation that follows is based on the last words of the verse. The reader is expected to know the other half of the verse and understand the interpretation given to it.

What R. Joshua's interpretation of the passage was, we can see from b. Sanhedrin 106b: מאי רפידים ר' אליעזר אומר:

²⁴ Such interpretations of proper names are often given by Philo. For instance: in "Allegories of the Sacred Laws," Book II, ch. xxii, "Jordan, being interpreted, means descent," derived from the word ירד, and in "Allegories," Book III, ch. iv, "In the land of Midian," "that is to say, being interpreted, in the judgment of the nature of things"; *ibid.*, ch. vi., Arami, "being interpreted, means high." In "That the Worse Is Accustomed to Be always Plotting against the Better," chapter iv, "The name Shechem, being interpreted, means shoulder, the symbol of endurance," and chapter vi, "the name Hebron, when interpreted, means conjoined and associated."

רפידים שמה ר' יהושע אומר שריפו עצמם מדברי תורה. What is Rephidim? R. Eliezer says, a place called Rephidim. R. Joshua says it means that they became negligent in the observance of the law.

We see that R. Joshua gives the same interpretation as the *Dorshe Reshumot* gave, as mentioned in Mek. d. R. Simon. In Mekilta R. Ishm., R. Joshua gives the same interpretation, only he characterizes it as an allegoristic interpretation, in opposition to the literal interpretation, which takes Rephidim as a name.

R. Joshua's saying read originally thus:

המקרא הזה רשום לפי שפירשו מדברי תורה לכך בא עליהם השונא שאין השונא בא אלא על החטא ועל העבירה:

This passage, "Amalek fought with Israel in Rephidim," is to be interpreted in the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*; Rephidim is a figurative expression, a רשום. Because the Israelites departed from the law, the enemy came upon them, for the enemy only comes because of sin and transgression. The rest of the words, from ומפורש till בלא תורה, which I have put in parenthesis, are a later addition, seeking to illustrate, with the help of the passage in Job, how necessary the law is for the existence and welfare of Israel.

The interpretation of proper names as signs or symbols is also given in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, b. Sanhedrin 104b-105a, also in p. x. 2, near the end:

דורשי רשומות היו אומרים כולם באין לעי"הב שנאמר לי גלעד זה אחאב שנפל ברמות גלעד, מנשה כמשמעו, אפרים מעוז ראשי זה ירבעם דקאתי מאפרים, יהודה מחוקקי זה אחיתופל דקאתי מיהודה, מואב סיר רחצי זה ניהוי שלקה על עיסקי רחיצה, על אדום אשליך נעלי זה רואג האדומי:

The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, All of them [referring to Ahab, Jeroboam, Manasseh, Ahithophel, Doeg, and Gehazi, who

are mentioned in the Mishnah as excluded from the world to come] will have a share in the future world, for it is said (Ps. 60, 9-10), "Gilead is Mine", Gilead stands here for King Ahab, who died in Ramoth Gilead. "And Manasseh is Mine", Manasseh is to be taken literally, not as referring to the tribe, but to King Manasseh. "Ephraim is the strength of My head"; Ephraim here means Jeroboam, who was an Ephraimite. "Judah is My lawgiver"; Judah stands here for Ahithophel, who came from the tribe of Judah. "Moab is My washpot"; this alludes to Gehazi, whose punishment had some connection with bathing or washing [he was punished for taking something from Naaman, who bathed in the Jordan, and became healed]. "Over Edom I will cast out My shoe"; Edom here designates Doeg the Edomite. The words are spoken by God, and they thus indicate that all the persons alluded to will become reconciled to God and come to Him in the other world.

The words in the two verses, 9-10 of Ps. 60, are taken out of their connection and away from their literal meaning. They are interpreted as signs or symbols alluding to certain persons, since they can be taken remotely as reminders of an event or an accident in their lives. This method was applied by the allegoristic *Dorshe Reshumot* as well as by Philo, who gives as a rule for allegorical interpretation, that a word may be explained independently of the sense clearly indicated by the connection in which it stands with the other words in the sentence (compare Siegfried, *l. c.*, 170-171).

The same disregard for the literal meaning of words and the context in which they are found is also to be seen in the following interpretation of the *Dorshe Reshumot*: Midrash Hagadol, ed. Schechter, 391, on Gen. 25, 22:

דבר אחר אם כן למה זה אנכי דורשי רשומות אומרין אמרה רבקה לפני הק"בה רב"שע אם כן עתיד עשו להרוג ולכלות אדירי חכמה שהן עתידין להיות מבניו של יעקב מי יאמר לפניך על הים זה אלי ואנוהו ולמי תאמר על הר סיני אנכי ד' אלקיך מיד חגרה מתניה ועמדה בתפלה: Another explanation of the passage Gen. 25, 22, "If it be so, why am I thus?" is the one given by the *Dorshe Reshumot*, who said: Rebekah said before the Holy One, blessed be He, Lord of the universe, if this be so, if Esau is bound to kill and destroy the mighty men of wisdom²⁵ that are to come from the children of Jacob, who will say before you at the Red Sea, "He is my God, and I will prepare Him a habitation" (Exod. 15, 2), and to whom wilt Thou say on Sinai: "I am the Lord thy God" (Exod. 20, 2)?

The meaning of this saying is, What will become of the relation between God and Israel expressed by these two sentences? The word זה stands as a sign for the whole sentence in Exod. 15, 2, beginning with this word, and אנכי is a sign or symbol for the first sentence of the decalogue, the first word of which is אנכי, "I am." As has already been said above, the first letter of a word and the first word of a sentence can be used as a sign for the word, and the sentence, respectively.

This method of taking a word as a sign to remind one of a sentence beginning with the word is applied in the following interpretation of the *Dorshe Reshumot* in the Midrash Hagadol, ed. Schechter, 769, on Gen. 50, 24; ויאמר יוסף אל אחיו אנכי מת ואלקים פקוד יפקוד אתכם דורשי רשומות אומרין מסורת היו בידיהן שמי שבא ואמר להן פקוד פקדתי אתכם הוא ינאל אתכם:

²⁵ That the *Dorshe Reshumot* consider the mighty men of wisdom to come from Jacob, reminds one of Philo's designating Jacob as "being mind" in *Allegories*, Book III, ch. vi, and "full of wisdom," *ibid.*, ch. i., and as "the practiser of knowledge," in the treatise "That the Worse is Accustomed to Be always Plotting against the Better," ch. ii.

"The *Dorshe Reshumot* said that there was a tradition among the Israelites in Egypt that the one who will come and speak the words beginning with פקוד (Exod. 31, 16) is the true redeemer, and he will deliver them." Here the word פקוד is not taken as the infinitive preceding the verb יפקוד to mean: "God will surely visit you." The word פקוד is rather interpreted as a sign for the phrase in Exod. 31, 16, used by Moses, which also begins with פקוד, and it characterizes the true redeemer, who will use this phrase on his appearance. The following verb, יפקוד, is the predicate. The one who will use the phrase פקוד, "will visit you" and bring you out of this land. It was a rule of allegorical interpretation applied by Philo to derive a special meaning from a word seemingly superfluous. The infinitive preceding a verb was considered by Philo a superfluous word of this sort (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 168-169). The *Dorshe Reshumot* followed the same rule, and therefore they sought to get a special meaning out of the infinitive פקוד preceding the verb יפקוד in Gen. 50, 24.

The same disregard for the literal meaning of the words and of the context in which they are found appears in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, in the Mekilta d. R. S. b. J., ed. Hoffmann, 117-118:

כי תקנה עבד עברי והלא לא היה לו לסמוך לאלה המשפטים אלא כי יריבון כי ינצו. וכי יכה איש שהן דינין דורשי רשומות אומרין לפי שנצטוו במרה על הדינין ונתן להן עשרת הדברות אמר משה רב"שע שמא יתעה יצר הרע את בניך ויעברו על המצוות ותגלה אותן מלפניך ותמכרם לעבדים לכך פתח כי תקנה עבד עברי כשתקניאם למלכיות אל ישתעבדו בהן יותר משש מלכיות שש שנים יעבוד בבל ומדי ופרס ויון ואשור ורומי ובשביעית יצא לחפשי חנם אמר לפניו רב"שע אל ישתקעו ביד רומי אלא זכות עשה עמהם חנם ובשביעית יצא לחפשי חנם. אם בנפו יבא היה למקרא לומר אם לבדו יבא לבדו יצא מהו בנפו אמר חס ושלום אם גרמו עונות אויבים באים אליהם באנפים כנשרים שטסס בשמים דכתיב

(איכה ד' יט) קלים היו רודפינו כנשרי שמים רב"שע בנפים של בטחונות תן להם מי אלה כעב העופינה וכיונים אל ארבותיהם (ישעיה ס' ח): Close upon the introductory sentence: "These are the judgments which thou shalt set before them," (Exod. 21, 1), the laws in verses 18, 22, 26, which are, properly speaking, judgments and civil laws, should have followed. The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, "Because the Israelites were commanded in Marah in regard to judgments and civil laws, and He gave them the Ten Commandments, Moses said, 'Lord of the Universe, the evil inclination may cause Thy children to go astray, so that they will transgress the commandments, and Thou wilt banish them from before Thee and sell them as slaves.'" For this reason he (Moses) began with the following verse (2), "If thou buy a Hebrew servant," that means, if thou causest the Hebrew (people) to be acquired as slaves by the kingdoms of the earth, let not more than six kingdoms oppress them, namely, Babylonia, Media, Persia, Greece, Syria,²⁶ and Rome. This is the meaning of the words, "six years shall he serve." Moses further said: "Lord of the universe, let them not remain forever in the hands of Rome, show them Thy mercy, though they do not deserve it, and let them become free." This is the meaning of the words, "and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing." The Scripture could have used the word לברו, "alone," in the phrase, "if he came in by himself, he shall go out by himself". Why is the word בנפו (meaning, also "with his wing") used? Moses said: "May it never come about, but if it should happen that, as a result of their sins, their enemies descend upon them as with wings, as the eagles that fly near heaven—for it is said (Lam. 4, 19): 'Our

²⁶ אשור stands here for Syria, not for Assyria.

persecutors are swifter than the eagles of heaven'—then, O Lord of the universe, give Thou them safe and reliable wings, with which the persecuted dove may fly home," as alluded to in Isa. 60, 8.

We see here again that the *Dorshe Reshumot* applied the rule of סמוכים (see above), and in the position of the two verses 1 and 2 near each other, they saw a relation of cause and effect indicated. The words are spoken by Moses and addressed to God: After Thou hast given them Thy laws, the transgression of which may bring them into slavery, deal mercifully with them. The six years are symbolical expressions for the six kingdoms that successively oppressed Israel. The word עברי "Hebrew" is not adjective to עבר, "servant," but stands for the Hebrew people. The word בנפו, which can also mean "with his wing," is a symbolical expression for the swift enemy as well as for the wing with which Israel, the gentle dove, will save herself. This interpretation of the word בנפו the *Dorshe Reshumot* derived from the fact that the Scripture does not use here the synonymous expression לבדו, "alone," which has no other meaning. In using the word בנפו, which means "alone," but has also the meaning "with his wing," the Scripture conveys the idea that we can interpret it according to its second meaning. This method is observed also by their fellow allegorist, Philo, one of whose rules for allegorical interpretation was, that special consideration is to be given to the difference between synonymous expressions, and if in a particular passage a particular synonym is used, the Scripture meant to indicate a special meaning contained in it and not in its synonyms (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 171 ff.).

The allegoristic *Dorshe Reshumot* followed another rule of allegorical interpretation often used by Philo,

namely, to seek to exhaust all possible meanings of a word, and thus gain a new sense from the scriptural passage (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 174-175). Accordingly, they would interpret a word as a *רשום*, sign or symbol, suggesting some idea, if one of several possible meanings of the word could, if but remotely, indicate or recall the idea. This is seen in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* quoted by R. Akiba, in Midrash Kohelet Rabba, x. 1:

דרש ר"ע לכן הרחיבה שאל נפשה ופערה פיה לבלי חק חקים אין כתיב כאן אלא לבלי חק מי שאין לו מצוה שתכריע על זכויותיו. דורשי רשומות אומרים האדם נידון אחר רובו ולעולם ימוד אדם עצמו חציו זכאי וחציו חייב עשה מצוה אחת אשריו שהכריע את עצמו לבף זכות עבר עבירה אחת אוי לו שהכריע את עצמו לבף חובה:

R. Akiba said in a discourse, The passage in Isa. 5, 14, "Therefore hell has enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure," means hell opened her mouth for the one who possesses no virtuous action that will cause his merits to overbalance his shortcomings, for the *Dorshe Reshumot* said, A man is judged according to the majority of his actions, and a man must always consider himself as having as many merits as faults, or as many good actions as bad ones to his credit, so that when he does one good deed, happy he, for he has thereby caused the scale holding his merits to sink, and when he has committed one sin, woe to him, because he has caused the scale of his guilt to decline.

The *Dorshe Reshumot*, whom R. Akiba mentions here, are his authority for this interpretation of the passage in Isaiah. For the *Dorshe Reshumot* were not merely intent upon giving a general rule for a man's estimate of himself and his actions; they were interpreters of the Scripture. Their saying here is evidently based upon their peculiar

interpretation²⁷ of the words לְבִלִּי חֵק, which can also mean “without law,” or “without the fulfilment of a law.” They, therefore, took the words not as the adverbial clause “without measure,” but as a רָשׁוּם, a sign, representing the man for whom hell opens her mouth as the one who falls short by one in the observance of the commandments. Hence they derived their saying that one good or bad action can decide a man’s standing and his fate.

The same rule, of seeking another meaning to a word, in order to derive the allegorical sense of the passage, is observed in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* (Mekilta d. R. Ishm., Way. IV, ed. Weiss, 58a, on Exod. 16, 21):

וַיִּלָּקְטוּ אוֹתוֹ בַּבֹּקֶר בַּשְּׁחֵרִית בַּשְּׁחֵרִית דּוֹרְשֵׁי רִשְׁמוֹת אָמְרוּ מִכָּאן שֶׁהִיָּה בִּמְן בּוֹעַת אַפֶּךָ תֹּאכַל לֶחֶם:

“And they gathered it every morning.” The words בַּבֹּקֶר mean literally בַּשְּׁחֵרִית בַּשְּׁחֵרִית, “every morning.” The *Dorshe Reshumot*, however, said that we learn from this passage, that the curse, “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Gen. 3, 19) applied even to the manna; also that was eaten in the sweat of the brow.

It is not reported how the *Dorshe Reshumot* derived their statement from this passage, but we can guess at their method. From the preceding interpretation of the words בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר as meaning “every morning,” in contrast to which the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is adduced, we can learn, that the *Dorshe Reshumot* did not interpret the words בַּבֹּקֶר בַּבֹּקֶר according to their literal

²⁷ Although the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is quoted as an independent saying, it is based upon the passage from Isaiah mentioned by R. Akiba. Only the Midrash did not care to quote the passage again, after having quoted it at the beginning of the paragraph. Similarly, in Sifre, Deut. 49, the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is apparently quoted as an independent saying, though it is based upon and interprets the scriptural phrase בּוֹ וְלִדְבָקָה בּוֹ quoted in the beginning of the paragraph; see above p. 304.

meaning. They did not take them to mean "morning," they attributed some other meaning to them. Now the word **בקר** can also mean "search," "seek," (Lev. 13, 36; 27, 33). According to their method of letting the sense of a passage depend upon their preferred meaning of a word selected from several possible meanings (see above) they here interpreted the word **בבוקר** to mean not "in the morning," but "with seeking, with diligent search," and they deduced from it, that even the manna was eaten in the sweat of the brow, since the people had to exert themselves in seeking it; and they succeeded in gathering it only after diligent, toilsome search.²⁸ In *Mekilta d. R. S. b. J.*, ed. Hoffmann, 78, this saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is mentioned as being based on the second half of the verse, **אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוּ**, "every man according to his eating."

According to this version, the *Dorshe Reshumot* followed another rule of allegoristic interpretation often applied by Philo, though originally Palestinian (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 170), namely, the rule whereby an indication of a deeper meaning, a hint of some idea, is discovered in the repetition of things known, or said before. Accordingly, the *Dorshe Reshumot* interpreted the words **אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוּ**, verse 21, not to mean "as much as one could eat," for this was said in verse 18, "they gathered every man according to his eating." The repetition of the words in verse 21 must indicate something else, they are a **רשום** signifying the manner in which the manna was eaten,

²⁸ It may be that the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is based upon the words **אִישׁ כְּפִי אָכְלוּ**, as appears from the *Mekilta d. R. S.* But in the *Mekilta d. R. Ishmael* the second half of the verse is not quoted, though the interpretation is based on it; as often happens in the *Midrash*, only the first part of a verse is quoted, even if the interpretation refers to the last half of it (see above p. 314).

namely, "man according to his eating," as man can eat, and men, the children of Adam, according to the curse decreed upon them, can eat only in the sweat of their brow, and the manna was no exception to the rule, Manna also was eaten in the way bread is eaten by man, namely, in the sweat of his brow.

It is probable that the same rule, of interpreting a word according to one of its possible meanings, and thus making it suggest some idea, was applied in the following saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, although its application is not so clearly visible as in the other two sayings. Mekilta, Way. III, ed. Weiss, 57b, on Exod. 16, 15:

ויראו בני ישראל ויאמרו איש אל אחיו מן הוא כי לא ידעו מה הוא כהדם
שאומר לחבירו מה הוא כך אמרו זה לזה (מכילתא דרשב"י, כך אמרו
ישראל מן הוא) דורשי רשומות אמרו ישראל קראוהו מן:

"And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, what is it? for they knew not what it was." Just as a man says to his fellow-man, "What is it?", so they said one to another (according to Mekilta d. R. S. b. J.: So the Israelites said "What is it?"). The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, "The Israelites called it manna."

Here, as in many other places, the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is quoted as a contrast to the preceding literal interpretation of the Scriptural passage. According to the latter, the word מן means nothing else than מה "what," and the phrase, "they said one to another, 'It is manna,'" simply means, they asked each other what it was. According to the *Dorshe Reshumot*, however, the words do not express a question at all, they express a positive statement. The phrase, "They said one to another, מן הוא," means they declared it was to be called "manna," that is, they called it by that name. But this name cannot, according to the *Dorshe Reshumot*, mean "food," מן be-

ing like מֶזֶן (comp. Succah 39 b), as Weiss in *Middot Soferim* interprets it, nor can it mean "something prepared," מֶן = וִימֶן Jonah 4, 6, as Wünsche in his German translation of the Mekilta understands it. The *Dorshe Reshumot*, being allegorists, must have given the name "manna" some allegorical or symbolical meaning, not the simple literal meaning, as "food," or "something prepared."

This is especially evident from the passage in Mekilta Way. V, ed Weiss, 59a, where the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is repeated as interpreting Exod. 16, 31:

וַיִּקְרָאוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶת שְׁמוֹ מֶן דֹּרְשֵׁי רִשְׁמוֹת אָמְרוּ בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל קִרְאוּ אֶת שְׁמוֹ מֶן:

"And the house of Israel called the name thereof manna." The *Dorshe Reshumot* said, "The house of Israel called its name manna."

Here the *Dorshe Reshumot* apparently do not add anything to what is said in the text, and one cannot see what interpretation they meant to give to the passage in verse 31 by repeating it almost in the same words.²⁹ It is, therefore, evident that the *Dorshe Reshumot* interpreted

²⁹ This difficulty was felt by R. Tobiah b. Eliezer, and in his Midrash *Lekah Tob*, ed. Buber, 57, he tries to explain it by remarking, after quoting the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*: אַבְל עַד שֶׁבָּאוּ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקִרְאוּ שְׁמוֹ מֶן. "But before the children of Israel came and called its name 'manna' it was not called manna, but 'food of the mighty,' or 'angels' food,'" according to Ps. 78, 25. A similar explanation is given by Wünsche in his German translation of the Mekilta. He remarks: *Der eigentliche Name ist nach Ps. 78, 24, רֶגֶן שָׁמַיִם, Korn des Himmels.* Comp. also Friedmann in *Meir Ayin* on Mekilta 51a.

But these explanations do not explain the difficulty. For if the *Dorshe Reshumot* meant to say that "manna" was merely the name used by the children of Israel, and not the original or real name of the heavenly food, they ought to have said that there was another name for it, and not merely repeat the words of the text, "The house of Israel called its name 'manna.'" Besides, one would think that the name given to it by the Israelites, who first saw it and first named it, should be its original and correct name.

the word מן in an allegorical sense, not according to its literal meaning. In their saying, "The children of Israel, or the house of Israel, called it manna," the word manna is used in a symbolical sense, and thus their interpretation of the scriptural passage is conveyed to us. What this allegorical meaning of the word "manna" was according to the *Dorshe Reshumot* cannot be learned with certainty from their saying itself, which, like most of their sayings, has not been preserved in its original form. It is probably quoted incompletely in the Mekilta. We can, however, guess at what this meaning was, when we consider how their fellow-allegorist Philo interpreted the word. According to Philo, manna is "the word of God, all nourishing wisdom" (On Seeking Instruction, ch. xl). In another passage Philo says: "Moses calls manna the most ancient word of God, by which appellation is understood something of the most general nature" (That the Worse Is Accustomed to be Plotting against the Better, ch. xxxi). Again, in the third book of the treatise on the Allegories of the Sacred Laws (ch. li), when he interprets the passage in Deut. 8, 3, "and He gave you manna to eat," Philo says: "And the proof of this is that He nourishes us with His own word, which is most universal of all things, for manna, being interpreted, means "what," and "what" is the most universal of all the things: for the word of God is over all the world, and is the most ancient and the most universal of all the things that are created."

It is probable that the allegoristic *Dorshe Reshumot* interpreted the word מן as a רשום, symbol, signifying "the word of God," or "spiritual food." In contrast to the literal interpretation of the words מן הוא, expressing a question, "what is it?" the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot* is quoted as interpreting it in an allegorical way, mean-

ing "that universal thing," "the word of God," all-nourishing wisdom. The idea of seeing in the manna merely spiritual food finds its echo in many utterances of the Palestinian teachers. Thus the saying of R. Akiba, Yoma 75*a*, based upon an interpretation of Ps. 78, 25, that the manna was the bread which the angels ate probably had the meaning, that manna was but spiritual food.³⁰ The same idea is reflected in other interpretations, as, for instance, of the passage Exod. 16, 31, where it is said that the manna was white, which is taken by the Talmud to mean that the manna caused the sins of Israel to become white, that is, freed Israel from their sins, מלבין עונותיהם של ישראל (Yoma 75), and again, in the interpretation of the words דומה לאגדה שהוא, Exod. 17, 31, as meaning מושך לבו של אדם, "The manna was like the words of the haggadah, which attract the heart of man" (Mekilta Way., ed. Weiss, 59*b*). In Yoma 75, this interpretation is given in the name of Aherim, "others," which may have

³⁰R. Ishmael's remark, that "R. Akiba made a mistake, for angels eat no bread" (Yoma 75), was not justified, since R. Akiba knew well that angels eat no bread. But his saying referred to spiritual food, or wisdom. As this idea, of identifying the manna with wisdom or the word of God, implied the denial of the actual story of the Scripture about the miracle of the manna, it was not popular among the rabbis, and sayings expressing this idea were either altogether suppressed or at least modified and not fully quoted. Thus, for instance, the saying that like the prophet the manna told the Israelites all their secrets (Mekilta, Waj. V, and Yoma 75), may have meant originally that the word of God reveals the truth, and was modified later on to mean, that by the number of the portions of manna, which miraculously came to each household in a measure corresponding to the number of persons belonging to it, certain secrets about the illegitimacy of children were revealed, and certain disputes about the ownership of slaves were settled. It is probably due to the same considerations, in order not to deny the actuality of the miraculous food, that the saying of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, interpreting it allegorically, has been preserved only in a shorter form.

been applied to the anonymous allegoristic interpreters, the *Dorshe Reshumot*.³¹

We have seen from all the interpretations that have been preserved to us, that the *Dorshe Reshumot* interpreted the Scriptures in an allegorical way, taking the words not in their literal meaning, but as signs and symbols. Their interpretations are, accordingly, quoted by way of contrast with the simple and literal interpretations, כשמועו. We have also seen that these interpreters of the Scriptures were Palestinian teachers, and independent of outside influences, their methods being the product of the inner development of the Palestinian exegesis. For although we have seen that many of their interpretations are given also by Philo, and that the rules for interpretation followed by them are the same that were applied by Philo, we must not assume that the *Dorshe Reshumot* were influenced by the Alexandrian allegorists. Rather the contrary is true, that Philo was influenced by the Palestinian allegoristic interpreters of the Scriptures (comp. Schürer, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*, III,⁴ 701 ff), as his rules of allegorical interpretation were composed of the rules applied by the Palestinian teachers as well as the rules applied by the Stoic philosophers (comp. Siegfried, *l. c.*, 165). In the *Dorshe Reshumot* we recognize therefore, the oldest Palestinian allegoristic interpreters of the Scriptures. As their methods were purely Palestinian, their interpretations according to these methods, being Palestinian products, were generally known and acceptable to the teachers of the law.

³¹ The interpretation to the word רַשְׁמוֹת given by the *Dorshe Reshumot* in Mekilta d. R. Simeon (see above p. 313) is ascribed in Mekilta d. R. Ishmael, Amalek I, ed. Weiss, 61a, to the *Aherim*, from which we can see that the name *Aherim*, "Others," has sometimes been applied to the *Dorshe Reshumot*.

This explains why more sayings of the *Dorshe Reshūmot* have been preserved than of the other class of allegorists, the *Dorshe Hamurot*, whose method and tendency, as we shall see, were not of Palestinian origin. In the course of time, however, the rabbis became apprehensive of the grave dangers that threatened Judaism from the allegoristic interpretation, according to the method of רשום, or, as it is also called, משל, "allegory." For, if the words of the Scripture are taken merely as an allegorical expression, משל, or symbolical signs, רשום, and not in their literal meaning, no religious law need be observed, since the words expressing it may be interpreted to us in an allegorical way, to mean something else than the command to do according to its literal meaning. It was, therefore, strictly forbidden to apply this method of the allegorists in interpreting scriptural passages which contain laws and commandments.³² R. Ishmael being the only one among the teachers who permitted himself to interpret three passages of the law in an allegoristic manner, במן משל (Sifre Deut. 237, ed. Friedmann, 117 b; Mekilta Mishpatim, VI, ed. Weiss, 88b), taking certain words occurring in these passages not literally, but merely in a figurative sense. But the rabbis objected even to an allegoristic interpretation of

³² In the Baraita of the Thirty-two Rules of Haggadic Interpretation, by R. Eliezer b. R. Jose Hagelili, the method of משל, of taking the words in an allegorical or parabolical sense is mentioned (rule 26), and it is added: במה דברים אמורים בדברי קבלה אבל בדברי תורה ומצוה אי אתה יכול לדורשן בלשון משל חוץ משלשה דברים שהיה ר' ישמעל דורשן בלשון משל. "This method can only be used in interpreting passages of the Scriptures which do not express laws, but in those passages of the Scripture that contain laws and commandments you cannot interpret the words in a figurative and allegorical sense, excepting the three passages which R. Ishmael has interpreted in the allegoristic method." The rule as well as the limitation of its use to the portions of the Scriptures not containing laws, is older than R. Eliezer, the son of R. Jose the Galilean, who merely collected these old rules and compiled them in his Baraita.

these portions of the Scripture, which did not contain laws. They feared that such an interpretation might lead to a denial of the historic facts narrated in the Bible, and especially to a disbelief in the miracles. As we have seen, according to the interpretation of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, there was no miraculous food, "manna," there was no real place Marah, in which the water was bitter, and was made sweet in a miraculous way through a certain tree. And there was no place called Rephidim, in which the Israelites engaged in battle with Amalek, and the Israelites were never wanting in real water in the wilderness. Added to the apprehensions of the rabbis was the danger of the allegoristic method's becoming a weapon against Judaism in the hands of the followers of the new religion, who would use it to prove from the Scripture the superiority of their new faith.³³ The rabbis, therefore, objected to the application of this method in interpreting the Scriptures, and they rejected as absolutely false most of the interpreta-

³³ Paul often used the allegoristic method applied by the *Dorshe Reshumot*. Thus in Hebrews 7, 2, he takes the names Melchizedek and Salem, Gen. 14, 18, not as proper names, but according to the meaning which these names could have, interpreting them to mean King of Righteousness and King of Peace, שלם being interpreted like שלום, in the same manner as the *Dorshe Reshumot* and Philo interpreted proper names according to the meaning of the words (see above n. 24). In I Corinthians 10, 1-3, he designates the meat which the Israelites ate in the wilderness, and the drink which they drank, as "spiritual," which reminds one of the interpretation of Philo and the *Dorshe Reshumot*, that "water" represents the "law," and "manna," the word of God (see above pp. 310 and 326 ff.), and not, as Meyer in his commentary explains, that they were designated as spiritual, as having been supplied supernaturally. In Galatians 5, 22-31, he seeks to prove the abolition of the law and rejection of the covenant on Sinai by allegorizing the story of Abraham's two sons Ishmael and Isaac from Hagar and Sarah, respectively, taking Hagar as a sign representing the covenant on Sinai, and Sarah, who in Gen. 11, 30, is called עקרה, "a barren woman," to represent Jerusalem, which, in Isaiah 54, is parabolically called a barren woman, and thus symbolizes the covenant of Jerusalem.

tions of the allegorists, as well as the scriptural proofs which the followers of the new religion brought by means of such allegoristic interpretations. They could not, however, reject the whole method as such, since in certain passages of the Scripture its application is justified and necessary, and, as one rabbi said: *אל יהי המשל הזה קל בעיניך שעל ידי המשל אדם עומד על דברי תורה*, "Let not the allegoristic method appear to you as slight, for by means of the allegoristic method one may sometimes get at the true meaning of the scriptural words" (Cant. R. I, 8).

They could not scorn the whole method as being false, but they could and did scorn the wild and exaggerated use made of it by a certain class of thinkers. The rabbis, therefore, declared that most of these allegoristic interpretations do not give the true and real sense of the scriptural passage. This is to be found in the interpretation according to the simple and literal meaning of the words. Thus the terms *רשום*, "symbolical meaning," and *משל*, "allegorical meaning," came to be considered as antonyms to *אמת*, "true and literal meaning" (see above). Even when, for the purpose of deriving an ethical lesson, the scriptural passage may be interpreted in an allegorical way, the rabbis made it a rule that *אין מקרא יוצא מירי פשוטו*, that its plain and literal meaning may never be ignored or denied.³⁴ This principle, intended, as it was, as a protest against the allegoristic method, had also, strange as it may appear, the effect of saving the method itself and in a measure approving it. Since it was declared that the literal meaning remains always the true and correct meaning of the Scriptures, that it cannot be explained away by

³⁴ Yebamot 11b, 24a, and Shabbat 63a. Although first mentioned by Judah b. Ezekiel, the rule is much older than his time and is of Palestinian origin.

any allegoristic interpretation, the rabbis felt assured that no harm could come to Judaism if this method was used carefully and moderately in homiletic discourses, for the purpose of deriving moral lessons from the Scriptures, always keeping in mind and making it understood that such interpretations are not to be taken seriously, as the real meaning of the scriptural word.³⁵ This changed attitude of the rabbis toward the allegoristic method weakened, in a measure, the resentment felt by them toward the ancient allegorists. It caused a reaction against the prevalent tendency, which was to ignore them, let them fall into oblivion, and suppress their sayings altogether. The rabbis were now less afraid of mentioning their names occasionally and quoting some of their less harmful sayings. Thus it came about that a few of the interpretations of the ancient allegorists have been preserved in the Palestinian as well as in the Babylonian Talmud, and in the Midrashim, originating in both countries. But even these few interpretations the rabbis did not preserve complete; they often shortened or modified them, to make them less objectionable and less harmful, and, as we have seen, in most cases the rabbis were careful to give, side by side with these interpretations, also the literal interpretation, *בשמועו*, as the true and real meaning of the passage. The majority of the interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, however, have been lost to us, the rabbis objecting to them and not caring to preserve them.³⁶

³⁵ Accordingly, we find in the Talmud many interpretations in the method of the *Dorshe Reshumot*; a word is taken as symbolizing or representing something not contained in its literal meaning.

³⁶ Eisenstein's theory (*Ozar Israel*, IV, s. v. *דורשי רשומות*), that the interpretations of the *Dorshe Reshumot* were collected and arranged in a special Midrash, called "The Midrash of the *Dorshe Reshumot*," subsequently lost, is absolutely without foundation. As we have seen, there

was a tendency among the rabbis to suppress these interpretations, and they did not care to preserve them. There never was such a Midrash of the *Dorshe Reshumot*. The words *מדרש דורשי רשומות*, occurring in Baḥya's Commentary on the Pentateuch (see *יתרו*, in Warsaw edition, p. 71b) and in Ṭur, *Orah Ḥayyim*, 118, do not refer to a Midrash of the *Dorshe Reshumot*, but to the interpretations (*מדרש*) of some kabbalistic teachers, who interpreted the letters of the alphabet as signs and according to their value as numbers (comp. Buber, *Yeriot Shelomoh*, 17). In Ṭur, *Orah Ḥayyim*, 113, it is expressly said, in the name of R. Jehiel, *דורשי רשומות*, *הם חסירי אשכנז*, "the *Dorshe Reshumot* are the pious men of Germany." We see here plainly that the mediæval rabbis used the name *Dorshe Reshumot* to designate certain mediæval teachers. The name thus used by them has nothing to do with the ancient allegorists of that name who are mentioned in the Talmud. Eisenstein probably followed the *Rab Pe'alim* by R. Abraham b. Elijah of Wilna, where it is said on pp. 46-47, that there was a "Midrash *Dorshe Reshumot*" quoted by Jacob Asheri and Baḥya. But this passage in *Rab Pe'alim* is not from R. Abraham b. Elijah. It has been put in by some copyist from a marginal note by an unknown and doubtful author (see Chones, note to Buber's *Yeriot Shelomoh*, 16-17).

(To be concluded)